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CHAPTER XIX

CHIEF PENRI ON SNAKES

I had not been staying in Chief Penri's home long before I became aware that he had lost the points of two of his toes. I asked him about this one day and he informed me that it was all owing to the spite of a fiendish viper. He said, "As I was walking along a narrow path one day, I suddenly felt a sharp prick in my toes and, on looking down, saw a viper slipping off into the scrub. I knew it had bitten me and that the bites of such creatures often proved fatal. I therefore quickly sat down and with a small knife cut into the ends of both toes and made them bleed profusely. In this way I thought to get rid of the poison. Nevertheless, both members festered and would not heal for a long time. But in the end, although they got better, I was left with the wounds you see." And with a strong feeling of disgust and in a deep, gruff voice he added, "The spiteful fiend!"

I am sure it must have taken a great deal of courage and cool nerve for him thus to sit down and cut his toes, and as soon as I heard this explanation I could no longer wonder at his great dislike to all of the snake kind. Whenever we were travelling together along narrow paths, unless it was after sundown, he always wished me to walk in front to scare away these vermin. He went barefoot and unprotected, while I wore thick boots through which no snake could bite. At night, however, he would go first, carrying a piece of smouldering touch-wood along with him, which he waved to and fro sharply in front of his feet, near the

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753 and friends to meet the doctor at his house, as he had something very important to say to them. When all had come together, he asked that, as soon as he was dead, the doctor would make a postmortem examination, extract all the diseased parts from his body, show them to those present, explain the malady, and then, having chopped them up very fine, scatter the pieces to the four winds. "For," said he, "it will never do for me to go to Heaven and meet the gods and my ancestors with a diseased body. That would be disgraceful." What a contrast with the above mentioned Irish woman!

752 776 824 I am fully convinced that there was a good deal more in my friend's request than appears on the surface; for, by having his diseased parts chopped up fine and scattered to the four winds, he was in fact, seeking to be avenged on the demons of disease and accidents. This will appear evident in what is now to follow.

WOÖI; WOÖI; WOÖI; came a weird cry through the trees of the forest one afternoon, as I was walking along a path not far from a certain village. I thought it must be some people in great distress, so I made my way quickly through the brush-wood toward the sound. Presently I came upon a peculiarly strange sight. There were a score or so of Ainu men and women standing round a big tree, howling, crying, and roaring out WOÖI, WOÖI, WOÖI. The men looked very angry and fierce, and the women all had their hair dishevelled and fallen over their shoulders and faces. The men, I saw, had old swords and long knives in their hands. I stood and looked at them in great astonishment, for I had never seen the people worked up so much before.

By and by they marched round and struck hither and thither with their knives and swords, the women weeping and wailing out a death dirge. Every now

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and then would come the owl-like cry *woši, woši, woši.* 752 776 824
And they would curse loudly. I came near them and found they were storming at the evil genii of the tree. There had been an accident. One of those present told me that a man had fallen out of the tree and been killed. The people had therefore assembled to perform a ceremony they called *Niokeush rorumbe*, i.e., "making

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war upon the demon tree." After watching for some time, I returned to my lodgings and later in the evening asked for more particular information with regard to this matter. The following lore was then given me.

"Should a person climb a tree and then fall out of it and be killed, or should a person cut down a tree and

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752 776 824 be killed by its fall, such a death is called 'getting harm from the tree.' Such accidents are caused by the multitude of demons inhabiting the various parts of the trunk, branches and leaves. When one has been killed thereby, the people ought to meet together, cut the tree down, chop it up into very fine pieces and scatter all to the four winds. For unless that tree be destroyed, it will always remain dangerous, and demons will continue to dwell in it. But if the tree be too large to cut up fine, let it be hacked and left there, the place being clearly marked, so that the people may not go near it."

And so, according to this and other like traditions, one is led to conclude that Mr. Arrow's desire for a postmortem operation did not arise simply because he wished to appear in heaven with a pure and healthy body, but also in part because he wanted vengeance taken on the demons of disease who killed him. In fact, he was undoubtedly seeking for purification and revenge in a thoroughly orthodox Ainu manner, and that by a post-mortem ceremony.

On a later day, I saw a ceremony performed which was called *niwen horippa*, i.e. "wild dance." It was after the death of a man from drowning. It was performed thus:

752 776 823 *Saké* was provided in abundance by the relatives of the victim, and messengers were sent to the villages near, inviting the men and women to join in the proceeding. All came, bringing their contribution of either *saké* or millet dumplings. The men all had, as is customary on such occasions, either a sword or long knife, and the women had their headgear hanging over their arms and their hair left hanging down in disorder. The men made a lot of willow fetishes and set them up about the place, said many prayers and offered libations. Then, after all had eaten well of dumplings and swallowed large amount of *saké*, they marched

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off in single file, shouting and chanting their death dirges. 752 776 823

The men held their swords and knives point upward in their right hands, close to the shoulder, and then in unison they took a step with their right feet and called out, "Woöi!" stretching the sword forward to the fullest extent possible. Then they moved their left feet forward in the same manner, at the same time drawing their swords back again and repeating the word, woöi. The cry resembled that of an owl during the night. This was carried on for some time. There was a great howling and at last the men seemed to get out of hand and danced about, striking in every direction and execrating the demon-mermaids and water nymphs in the river. They were much excited and looked quite wild. I smiled at them, and Old Penri actually winked at me, a compliment I returned. This kind of thing is very catching and being young then, I could hardly refrain from going in "for the fun of the thing." However, I let it pass and all was well. When all had been finished and the *sakĕ* drunk up, with many a smack of the lips, they returned to a big bacchanalian feast. They slept that night where they fell over drunk. And so their battle with the demons of accidents from water came to an end.

It is these old ideas and superstitious practices which harm the people so much. They are like the wheels of some great Juggernaut passing over them and ruthlessly crushing them down and making it impossible for them to rise again.

The observance of this special ceremony of the "wild dance" is particularly important because the drowning may, so the Ainu imagine, have been done through the agency of an ordinary demon in an ordinary way, or by one who has been specially called upon to do it on account of the spite of another person, who had cursed the victim and prayed him to

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752 drown him. With regard to this matter my friend
776 said, "I will tell you about the 'red stone.'"
823 "Should one see a very large red stone in a river, let him know that there is a merman inhabiting it. For our ancestors have taught us that such large stones are undoubtedly the homes of these creatures. And so it comes to pass that bad-hearted men say prayers to these stones and ask the merman inhabiting them to kill the enemy. Then, should the person so cursed wade the river, the merman is sure to come out from his home and slay him."

The whole merman tribe, he told me, are supposed to be very wicked and dangerous, so that their homes must be treated with proper respect. Hence the worship of big stones. The merman, when asked, will not only attack a cursed person when crossing a river in the immediate vicinity of the stone—its home—but when crossing any part of the river, so evidently the creature is regarded as ubiquitous as well as evil. Though unseen, it sees the man wherever he may be. My informant also told me that he thought mermen were part human and part fish. The ceremony of the "wild dance" is in part one of fear and also in part a ceremony of propitiation, for fetishes are offered to the stone with libations of saké.

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If it is the lower one which twitches, it is to make known the fact that there is to be a wailing for the dead." And another friend added, "Yes, it is a person's good genius which makes known such things to him." 787 826

A third person then joined in and said, "Should any person have warts upon his hands or corns on his feet, he should rub them well with the cast-off skin of a snake. That drives them away quickly. The reason is that the name for 'wart' is *eremu-tampu*, i.e. 'rat sheath.' Rats are very much afraid of snakes, which catch and eat them. Therefore such things cannot abide snakes. The skins of snakes burnt into powder and rubbed well in are said to heal chaps quickly." 753 755

I found that the people used quite a large number of trees, shrubs, and herbs in treating the sick. Among such I found the feather-columbine, the common celandine, chickweed, actinidia, horse-chestnut, bird-cherry, spikeweed, mugwort, the flower shoot of the petasites, winter-cherry, wild parsnip, wild onion and others. In cases of stomach trouble, besides the river otter's heart, as mentioned above, soup made from the seeds of docks was considered very effectual. The dried seeds were beaten in a mortar, then well sifted and the flour boiled till it became something like pea soup, and, when cool enough, a cupful swallowed. For some complaints, a decoction made by steeping alder bark in cold water was administered. Another way was to stuff a pillow with convolvulus roots, for the sick one to lay his head on. Some such roots were chewed in order to produce expectoration. How the people could use so many remedies, and survive, I cannot understand! 278 755 164 164 755

For toothache, I know of one man who heated a nail very hot and held it on the offending member. This, he said, was to kill the demon insects which were 278 752

7:Munro & Seligman D. E-4. 5 (ca. 1900-1942) 1963
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sound. When the patient arrives at the backward-shaven *inau* of Mintara-koro Kamui a sickle is drawn downwards from both shoulders six times by the two women, as is done in the Kamui Puchi purification.

Lastly, the patient is taken to the chaff-thrown *nusa*, and purification is again performed, as in the case of Pauchi Kamui, either bamboo grass or mugwort being used. The rite performed before entering the house and that of airing the outer garment are as described previously. The evil *inau*, which were pulled up during the ritual, are placed behind the privy, and, as their function is ended, the rag of black cloth which distinguished the leader is removed. With them are deposited the switches used in brushing away evil.

In cases of hysterical neuroses the types of *uepotara* just described are often successful, but should they fail, incision is sometimes resorted to. Slight incisions are made, little more than scratches, with the sharpened point of a sickle. These may be on the abdomen or over the affected part. They are said to let out 'bad blood', and are stroked over with the *wen haru*. Isonoash says that the bleeding affords a means of exit for the disembodied spirit or its evil influence. There are slight differences in the prayers, and the six sets of evil *inau* are arranged not in a single line but in a double line of three sets on each side. Between these the patient is treated by purification, as described in the last ceremony. In both these exorcisms a thorny switch of *Rubus crataegi-folius* (*fure ai-ush ni*) is sometimes used, but is laid on lightly. The remaining operations do not differ from those of the *uepotara* previously described.

When the illness is due to possession by a red fox or a badger, a *nusa* is set up at the third tree for Hash-inau-uk Kamui, and the elder prays there also.

It has already been said that all serious diseases are believed to be due to evil spirits. In former times there were Ainu who were believed to cause sickness and even death by casting spells or by other magical expedients. I regret that I have not visited some places where one or two such people are said to be still living. But in no case known to me has sickness been attributed to black magic; exorcism is always directed against spirits of some sort.

Epilepsy was formerly treated with severe measures, by purification by means of fire and by immersion in a river till the patient was unconscious or nearly so, but I am told that this is no longer practised,

/767 cont./

845 by their own assertion, sometimes lasts as long as three months
844 after the birth of a child. In 1903, during my stay among the
114 Ainu a 32-year old woman died a few days after her delivery who had suffered violent pains and had lost consciousness during the birth. The child came into the world alive but died a few days later.

846 Twigs of the taxus baccata strongly heated and then laid
824 on the body of the patient are also considered an excellent
757 remedy to help the weakened woman regain her health as fast as possible.

844 Treatment of the Newborn.

[752] The umbilical cord is cut with a knife; the wound is
[237] sprinkled with the powder obtained by rubbing river shells together, and the wound is then bandaged with a piece of cloth. The navel always heals normally and a fracture of the navel is
856 totally unknown to the Ainu. They massage the head of the
844 child several times a day since the Ainu maintain that it might otherwise be misformed. The head must be rounded back and front and also on top. This form the Ainu try to achieve in shaping the soft head of the child. At the same time they wrap the child's head /768/ with soft, warm chips of wood, especially where it is soft.

844 The newborn baby is washed with warm, clear water without any admixture on the very first day of its life. A boy gets a colder bath than a girl. They pour the water in small quanti-
[415] ties from a vessel made of birch bark onto the body of the child which they hold with the left hand over the floor while they rub it with the right hand. It is forbidden to use water for the bath that one has previously had in one's mouth, as is the
[753] custom among the Gilyak. The Ainu believe, that the child will develop a disease of the eyes if he is washed in such water.

844 As soon as the child is wrapped in diapers it is given
853 nourishment. During the first day the newborn is usually suckled by another woman who still has enough nourishment. But when no suitable women is in the vicinity the mother herself will giver her breast to the child right away. When the mother has